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## Lynchburg Police Unit Volunteers to Combat Hunger *New Unit Seeks to Strengthen Communities Ties through Service*

(LYNCHBURG, Va. — Nov. 29, 2016) — Members of the Community Action Team (CAT), a unit within the Lynchburg Police Department, are taking action to feed their neighbors in need. They have joined forces with the Blue Ridge Area Food Bank’s Lynchburg area branch to help distribute food boxes to seniors in the region. In the process, they have also enlisted help from criminal justice students at Liberty University who also want to be of service in their community. CAT’s food distribution assignments will begin this week and continue throughout the holiday season and beyond.



CAT Team Volunteer

Since expanding the Reach Program to provide food to older adults, the Food Bank has a significant need for volunteers who can help with food distribution on a monthly basis. After several discussions and planning sessions, CAT began helping the Food Bank at senior housing complexes across the area.

“They heard we needed volunteers and, despite their hectic jobs, they stepped up,” said Kristi West, Food Bank partner services coordinator for the Lynchburg area. West reached out to the police department after learning about the idea to enlist law enforcement as volunteers at a recent conference.



Senior Food Box Recipient

“We want to be more visible and proactive in our community,” said Sgt. J. J. Rater, supervisor of CAT. “We recognize that we can do our jobs better when we connect more directly with citizens,” he added.

In 2017, CAT creator Chief Raul Diaz plans to create zones or beat areas in in which officers on patrol will help distribute food and get to

know their fellow community members.

“CAT members, through constant, reliable participation in community activities, have a goal to become well known to community leaders, civic and religious groups, and other neighborhood organizations,” said Diaz. “Our members strive to become trusted, dependable advocates for the Lynchburg community, and harness the power that comes through unity with their service areas.”

“We need many more regular, committed volunteers to help us on a monthly basis at designated locations,” West added.

If other groups or individuals are interested in becoming regular volunteers for this program, they can visit [brafb.org/volunteer](http://brafb.org/volunteer) and click on Volunteer Now to learn about available opportunities, or contact Jennifer Clark-Robinson at 540-213-8402.

For interviews, please contact a member of the Food Bank’s communications team.

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### **About The Lynchburg Police Department CAT Unit**

Formed in April of 2016, the mission of the CAT unit is to educate the public through awareness and prevention; promote high visibility and enforcement by police; cooperate with other agencies in education and enforcement; gather intelligence to support trends and target specific enforcement in the future; inform the public and communities of our actions and results; and gauge public attitudes and mobilize accordingly.

### **About the Blue Ridge Area Food Bank**

Founded in 1981, the Blue Ridge Area Food Bank is the largest organization alleviating hunger in western and central Virginia. Headquartered in Verona, VA, the Food Bank serves 25 counties and eight cities through distribution centers in Charlottesville, Lynchburg, Winchester and Verona. The Blue Ridge Area Food Bank distributes nearly 24.6 million pounds of food annually to 114,400 people each month through a network of 215 community partners – food pantries, soup kitchens, shelters, schools, churches and other non-profit groups. The Food Bank is a member of Feeding America, a national food bank association that supports 200 food banks across the United States. ***Today, we celebrate thirty-five years of nourishing lives.*** For more information, visit [www.brafb.org](http://www.brafb.org).